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SPIN OFF

Weak Bay-area comebacks

With the recent successes of Jefferson Starship and the Grateful Dead, there has been a minor eruption of the old psychedelic San Francisco rock scene.

Two previously heralded and since disbanded Bay Area groups, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Spirit, have recently recorded comebacks.

Neither band broke through to reach national stardom (although Quicksilver enjoyed a belated success) but these works may well wreck our memory of how they once were.

Technically, both albums are smoother and tighter than the feverish 1960s archetypes, but they nevertheless cannot avoid sounding burnt-out. They've mellowed and that's the trouble; the years seems to have eaten away of their brains and brawn.

In **Solid Silver** (Capitol), the only thing holding the original group together is the mixing. The free and easy accident improvisational style has been stifled in favor of a tightly edited process that sounds more like an average "southern rock" band than Quicksilver.

Son of Spirit (Mercury) does slightly more to recall the original enigmatic style of Spirit and Randy California's whispery, dazed offering will doubtless touch the hearts of some young trippers — but probably not enough of them to warrant another try.

Some effects are interesting — as was always the case with Spirit — but the album is so way-out in a surprisingly lame kind of way (perhaps the sun and drugs got to his brain) that this will likely only survive as a relic of a lost mind.

— JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Goodtime feeling

Its liner notes refer to Papa John Kolstad's new album, **Beans Taste Fine** (Fretless) as a public service and if you like blues, ragtime and swing tunes with an exciting goodtime feeling, you'll probably agree.

Kolstad is a fine singer and 12-string guitarist whose love and respect for his music shines right through the grooves of the record.

He has obviously done his homework as the influences of Leadbelly, Leroy Carr, Robert Johnson and Martin, Bogan & Armstrong are very evident in his presentation. However, Kolstad is not just an imitator of these musical forebears. He combines their influences with his own musical ideas and personal warmth to come up with a record that is musically interesting and entertaining while at the same time remaining true to its roots.

Supporting musicians: Jim Tullio on bass; Lewis London on guitar, dobro and mandolin; and Dick Fegy on guitar all do fine jobs.

However excluding Kolstad, the star of the album is Wildman Mike Turk on the harmonica. Turk is one of those rare musicians who can turn harmonica playing into an art. His playing is the best this side of Sonny Terry and is good enough to be featured on every cut without becoming boring. Turk's interplay with Lewis London's mandolin on Gershwin's Lady Be Good is delightful.

— Mike Regenstreif

Many different places

Someone said about Elvin Jones, "The Drummer," that his most distinguishing quality as a musician was that he knew how to be in three different places at once.

What may have been meant as a great compliment then seems to be an understatement now.

Jones sense of dynamics puts him in many more places than just three, and this is beautifully demonstrated on his two latest releases.

Elvin Jones Live (PM) Records) is a recording of the John Coltrane Memorial Concert of September '71, at Town Hall in New York.

The group featured is a quintet with Frank Foster on tenor and soprano saxes, Joe Farrell on tenor sax and flute, Chuck Corea on piano, Gene Perla or bass, and Elvin, of course providing the steam and the breeze on drums.

The performance consists of two long tunes which wander freely from the meditative peace to the fuming passion of a stampeding herd. There is not a dull moment, and the audience feels on the edge of their seats until they unleash their applause at the end.

Farrel on flute, and Corea on piano are particularly delicate on Simone. Elvin's work on that tune is truly amazing as he consistently supports and feeds his rhythmic punches without ever interfering. Perla is like Elvin's shadow on bass, until his solo takes us through subtle and melodic moods with a firm, well-defined purpose.

Elvin's solo is a kaleidoscope of rhythms which can teach all the drummers everything they ought to learn. Frank Foster, who wrote the tune, takes everyone home under the wing of his gutsy tenor.

Elvin Jones is **"On the Mountain"** with Jan Hammer and Gene Perla (PM Records), and that's a different story.

Whereas the Coltrane Memorial is very much in the Coltrane school of music, this one is in the Hammer direction of electronics and moog synthesizers. Elvin is at his perfect ease either way.

Hammer is a brilliant pianist on any keyboard, including acoustic, and his influence on Mahavishnu paved the way for the many imitators who plague us with nothing more than noise.

The weight is pretty well shared by this tight trio and the compositions are shared evenly by Hammer and bassist-composer Perla, to the tune of three contributions each.

Sunrah — which spells human backwards — is a very pretty ballad by Perla while Hammer poeticizes on the concert grand. On the Mountain, also by Perla, drives gently along, with Hammer on acoustic and electric keyboards.

Smoke in the Sun, by Hammer, displays some of the Hammer magic that made Mahavishnu ride the crest for so long. Another Hammer composition, London Air is as poetic as Debussy — save that he didn't have the rhythm section.

Edvin Jones is On The Mountain, indeed, demonstrating his mastery of stultiety in drumming, and he is good company.

Jan Hammer engineered the recording and Perla produced it. Joynes stands firmly in front, in the middle, and behind it, 108. When musicians of that caliber take their own music into their own hands . . . look out. No — listen.

—Nighthawk

Cuteness hurts Welles illusion

By NETTIE HARRIS
for The Gazette

Orson Welles is his ebullient self as he guides us through what surely is a Cook's tour of fake and illusion. He can be seen doing this in "Verite et. Mensonges," which opened in French at the Elysee Theatre on Milton St., December 25. The English version "Fake" will come to Montreal in a few weeks, according to word from the distributors.

Welles brings together on film two individuals he calls "the greatest fakers of this century." They are, of course, Elmyr de Hory, master art forger, and Clifford Irving — who needs no introduction but who now has written a book about de Hory. Howard Hughes is thrown in for good measure and we have also a female Welles says he is "introducing." She is Oja Kodar whose wriggling derriere in the opening scenes has every girl watcher in Paris agog.

Art dealers, particularly in the United States, come in for a panning. DeHory says many museums are ashamed to expose his work as fake because it would at the same time expose the curator as ignorant.

"Fakers make fools of experts," says Welles.

Paid his debt

"Not one museum knew the difference, not one refused me," says de Hory, quickly adding that he is now broke and has paid his debt to society by having been imprisoned briefly in Spain. There, we are assured, he was visited by a Baroness — but was she a fake too?

Fascinating though the world of the con man is, this film seems to have given us a little too much of it. It is interesting to see the two Irvings, Clifford and wife Edith smugly discussing the unquestionable brilliance of de Hory. It is interesting too, as Welles points out, that these master fakers all operated from the island of Ibiza in Spain. Could it be that the Irvings based their ill fated Howard Hughes escapade on lessons from the master?

Welles also takes us back to Hughes' heyday as an aviator and there are some spectacular shots of the tanker tape reception given Hughes when he came to Broadway following his record breaking flight around the world. But then the inevitable. "Is Hughes alive?" asks Welles. "could that voice of denial heard on radio when he exposed Irving — was that a fake?"

The show opens with views of Oja Kodar. It closes almost the same way except in the final shots Oja stops wiggling and gets to talking. She tells us her grandfather was none other than Leonardo da Vinci, remarking that she herself was Picasso's model.

In return for modelling services, she managed to con Picasso into giving her the 22 paintings he made of her. She says she returned triumphantly home with them whereupon her grandfather burned them.

It is hard to tell the wheat from the chaff.

All is illusion

After that sequence Welles winks conspiratorily and lets us in on a secret. That whole story is "a fake."

"All" he says, "all on this crumbling planet is an illusion."

Welles seems to have mellowed with age. As narrator he is seen throughout, garbed in a long black cape and sporting a black bomburg hat which frames his large and mischievous face. He recreates on film his "man from mars," famous broadcast, throwing in a few flying saucers for good measure. All trick photography.

Welles has managed to thread together a hodge podge of scenes that would be otherwise confusing. And it is too long. We see over and over again those two masters of the con game, de Hory and Irving. It could have been shortened to one hour had we less of the "cute" or "profound" pronouncements of the so called "beautiful people" who surround him at wine parties on Ibiza.

Violence can't save Killer Elite

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

Sam Peckinpah's trademark of excessive violence is maintained in his new movie, The Killer Elite (at the Palace, Dorval and Laval theatres). But the film comes up short in most everything else.

James Caan, Robert Duvall, Gig Young and Arthur Hill are all in the movie, but between fight scenes they have little to do — or at least little of interest.

The CIA seems to be involved here, fashionably enough. But the crux of the movie is the attempt by the side James Caan is on to keep the side Robert Duvall is on from killing a visiting Oriental. And wouldn't you know it, Robert Duvall has a Japanese suicide terrorist squad on his side.

But the big fight scene, when it finally comes, is something of a dud. Oh, there's blood on the walls and holes in people's heads and bodies. But absent is the choreography of death that distinguished The Wild Bunch or the building horror of Straw Dogs.

There are some kung fu tricks Peckinpah picked up from Bruce Lee movies. But throughout the movie — and especially during the fight scenes — there are unforgiveable dull spots.

Peckinpah could do better, he's proved that, and so could scriptwriter Sterling Silliphant, the creator of Route 66 and scripter of In the Heat of the Night.

James Caan in Sam Peckinpah's The Killer Elite

La Grande Bourgeoise a strong film

By NETTIE HARRIS
for The Gazette

If you want to see a turn of the century "whodunit," you'll find it in La Grande Bourgeoise starring Catherine Deneuve at Cinema 3 in Le Paradeis Theatre on St. Catherine St.

This French-language film might be worth seeing for its acting alone but there's more to it than that. The photography, costuming and music are all accomplished with incredible good taste. The music for instance, depends mostly on the tones of a single violin at crucial moments rather than on the crash bang effects of full orchestra we have become used to in similar movies out of Hollywood.

The story briefly concerns a beautiful countess who frequently quarrels with her husband because she does not love him. Secretly she is having affairs. Her housebold of maids know this, but her father — who is a professor and who advocates to his pupils a regime of socialism — is unaware of her amorous forays—

An astute but embittered chief of enquiries decides to get at the professor and his socialism through the daughter. The daughter is therefore arrested as the murderer of her husband, although her wayward brother confesses to the crime.

The murder is never solved. You get the impression that neither committed the crime and that even the church was involved since a Cardinal is shown talking with the chief of enquiring police, and he expresses his dissatisfaction with the scandales being spread in the colleges by Catherine Deneuve's father.

Emotion-packed

All who take part in this emotion-packed drama do so with finesse. It would be easy to slip into sickly melodrama with this type of material but director Mauro Bolognini and producer Raymond Danon have avoided this through clever camera manipulation and close ups that catch an emotion, rather than with microphones that catch a sickly phrase. There are a few sex scenes but these are pictured with a casualness that borders on the artistic.

With nostalgia running rampant these days, La Grande Bourgeoise has a theme not too different from Canada's own Kamouraska, produced by Claud Jutra a few years back. Both highlight maligned ladies. Both are based on historic facts and thus the director is able to display his stars in all the elegance of an elegant period.

Deneuve is not required to act much, except in the final trial scene. But she is her own beautiful self throughout and seems to have been born to wear the veiled hats, long chiffon gowns, and flowing robes of the early 20th Century.

Anne Bancroft flees from the burning blimp Hindenburg

Hindenburg is for escapists

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

The best part of The Hindenburg (at the Alwater I) is the part at the end when the giant airship explodes and burns. The filmmakers have spliced clips from period newsreels with modern scenes — and done it so well you can't tell which is which.

The only silly aspect of this is that the movie must suddenly switch from color to black and white, to match, of course, the black and white newsreel.

But apart from that big ending, this story of the last flight in 1937 of the hydrogen-filled Nazi airship Hindenburg is Grade B stuff.

The cast list is impressive — George C. Scott, Anne Bancroft, Gig Young, Burgess Meredith, Peter Aubersjonois and more — but sensitive performances are not where the film is at.

This is escapist adventure in the best traditions of the modern disaster movie.

Hustle just old tricks

By JACOB SISKIND
of The Gazette

Hustle (at the Claremont, Fairview, Laval and Parisien) is a clicher ridden bit of hack work that uses every old trick in the book to sustain audience interest.

Catherine Deneuve is a prostitute who is currently living with a police detective while carrying on her lucrative business. Burt Reynolds is the cop and he wanders around with his chest-hairs hanging out through most of the picture.

There is a murder and there are a number of ancillary characters who keep popping up and distracting you as you try to sleep, but mostly there is Miss Deneuve looking hard as nails, with a blotchy complexion, obviously the worse for wear.

The oldest profession is obviously the toughest.

There is a rather tame auto chase, there are other bits of film that could have been clipped from any standard flic of the genre and there is a cameo portrait by Eddy Albert, who looks more puffed and stuffed every time he appears in a picture.

The only people with hearts of gold in Hustle are those who paid admission to see it. And they never get a chance to see themselves.

Detective Reynolds, hooker Deneuve in Hustle

Million-dollar puck fun for kids, adults

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

A movie that kids will like and parents won't mind seems a heaven-sent commodity at this time of year. The Mystery of the Million Dollar Hockey Puck (at the Monkland and Van Horne theatres and at four more theatres in French) is just such a thing.

It has action, interesting characters, lots of local color (the movie was made last winter here and in Quebec City), a story with a beginning, a middle, an end and a pleasant implausibility about it.

It also has the Montreal Canadiens, both on the ice — there are truly exciting shots of a Forum game against Detroit — and off — Bob Gainey won't win an Oscar for his walk-on, but he does all right.

The story is about two children, about eight years old, orphans from Chicoutimi who overhear two villains plotting to smuggle diamonds out of the country inside a puck tucked in a Canadiens tote bag.

Big finale

Naturally they go after the crooks. The chase leads to Quebec City, where they cross the river by ice-boat, ride up the Ascenseur, slide down the toboggan run and take part in the Carnaval parade, and then to Montreal and the big finale at the Forum.

The two kids, Michael MacDonald and Angele Knight, are cute in a non-cloying way. The villains, Jean-Louis Millette and Kurt Schiegl, are villainous in the same super-menacing way that cartoon villains are.

Co-authors and directors Peter Svatek and Jean Lafleur, while they couldn't quite fill all the holes in the plot, keep the movie moving and the calls close.

Fun for the whole family.

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